

# Spaxton CofE Primary School

*'Together we flourish and achieve'*



## Attendance Policy

DATE: September 2021

POSTHOLDER RESPONSIBLE: Rebecca Skews

MONITORED BY: Local Governance Committee

DATE RATIFIED BY GOVERNORS:

AUDIENCE: Staff, parents, pupils

REVIEW DATE: September 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Skews'.

Approved on behalf of School:

(Head of School)

## Principles

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence on the part of the parent that can result in legal action. High levels of attendance are crucial for so many areas of development and gives your child the best opportunities to achieve and progress to their maximum potential. It promotes not only their learning and educational abilities, but provides many life skills and long-term positive work ethics.

Children who have good levels of attendance are more likely to be able to progress socially, have enhanced self-esteem and confidence, develop time management skills, have a good understanding of expectations for future life and develop a respect for the importance of punctuality and attendance. Importantly, the more time they are in school the more time they have for learning.

Even a child with 90% attendance equals  $\frac{1}{2}$  day missed every week and over a school year that would equate to one month out of school, that means they are missing 100 lessons. Any child can at times feel unhappy about attending school. Families may be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties, are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter; it may even make things worse.

## Definitions

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. Any information about the cause of each absence is always required, if possible in writing, evidence will be required to support some absences.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or other unavoidable causes.

**Unauthorised absences** are those that the staff at school do not consider reasonable, or for which no 'leave' has been given.

These are an offence on the part of the parent and include:

- Keeping children off school without a good reason
- Truancy from a whole session
- Absences that have never been clearly explained
- Children arriving at school too late to get a mark
- Taking holidays during term-time, this includes attending a family wedding.

## Parents and Carers' responsibilities

Parents and Carers are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together. The school will not be able to authorise absences for holidays, shopping, looking after other children or adults, birthdays, day trips etc. Leave may however, be granted in an emergency or exceptional circumstance, for example, for genuine

pastoral reasons (e.g. after the death of close relative). Parents are required to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed in advance and given evidence for this appointment (for example, a medical letter). A 'present' mark can still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole session.

### **Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives and strategies**

At Spaxton of C of E Primary has a whole school attendance target of 96%. Attendance and Punctuality are monitored weekly and should a child be persistently late or have a poor attendance, parents/carers will be contacted in the first instance by the class teacher. Attendance figures will be shared with parents in the end of academic year report.

### **Procedures**

Procedures if attendance falls below the school expectation.

#### If a child's attendance falls below 96%, the procedures are as follows:

Parents are contacted by their child's class teacher and a conversation to discuss the decline in attendance will take place. Support will be offered to the family if required and appropriate.

#### Attendance Percentages below 95%

Parents will be contacted by the Headteacher to discuss the decline in attendance and there will be offer of support from a member of the school team.

#### Attendance Percentage below 90%

Parents will be invited into school by the headteacher to work collaboratively on creating an action plan, to discuss the situation in greater detail and medical records will be requested as appropriate. If attendance percentage does not improve, a referral to the Parent Family Support Advisors (PFSA) will be encouraged. Regular weekly review meetings will be arranged. If attendance does not rise, the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority, will be informed and it may be necessary to take further action.

School-age pupils are **persistent absentees** if they miss 10% of sessions or more. Therefore, any pupil with an attendance below 90% will be placed on the persistent absence register. The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of children attending school at this percentage and is required to make interventions to support families. These are called 'persistent absentees' by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category.

### **Fixed Penalty Warnings/Notice**

A warning letter will be issued after ten unauthorised sessions have been recorded over a period of twelve weeks. The warning letter will be effective for twelve weeks and during this time it is an expectation that the child's attendance increases.

After three weeks, the attendance will be reviewed. If there is no improvement to the attendance for that child, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued which will result in a fine of £60 or £120 if not paid within 28 days.

### **Procedures if your child is absent**

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

#### First day absence

Parent/ Carers are required to call in when their child is absent for any reason. If the school is not contacted, a call home will be made to ensure all children are accounted for.

#### If Your Child is Absent.

- Parent/ Carers are required to contact the school office on the day of the absence, informing them of the reason for absence and before the registration period at 9am.
- Each reason will be recorded on the child's registration document.
- The Parent/ Carers are required to contact the school **EVERY** day the child is absent.
- If Parent/ Carers do not contact the school and the school is unable to get hold of them, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- If the school are concerned about a 'Child Missing in Education' the procedures stated within Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

### **Procedures if a child is absent due to persistent illness.**

If a child is persistently ill, school will be able to provide support for the child and the family. Parent/Carers are required to contact the school office to inform the school of medical appointments and if they are absent for long periods during serious illness. In this instance, the school will require written medical evidence, for example, letters or a doctor's visit.

### **Any planned absence from school, including holidays within term time.**

Since September 2013, it has no longer been possible to authorise family holidays. Leave may only be granted for 'exceptional circumstances' and examples may include; visiting a new school, a recognised religious festival, a recognised sporting event, a funeral or taking an external exam. For any requests for leave, parents are required to complete a request of leave form available at the school office.

There are weekly attendance meeting between the Head of School and office manager where all requests for leave are considered.

Any holiday will be marked as unauthorised and will be recorded on the register. There is warning letter issued and any subsequent holiday taken, will possibly be issued with a fixed penalty notice, resulting in a fine of £60 per child per parent, which becomes £120 if not paid within the 28 days.

One day is authorised for a recognised religious event, but any other days taken before or after this day will be given an unauthorised holiday mark.

It is important to note that all holiday and fine warning letters will be chronologically recorded to support the issue of a fixed penalty notice.

### **Punctuality**

It is imperative that children learn the importance of punctuality in order to fulfil their own role in society as they grow into young adults. This role modelling of good practice begins in primary school.

Children are expected to arrive at school between 8.45-9am to ensure the children are settled and ready to start their learning and receive their registration mark.

Registration period runs until 9.10am and registers are closed to enable lessons to start promptly. A late mark is given to any child arriving after 9.10am. An unauthorised mark will be allocated to the child if they arrive after 9.30am.

### **Absence**

Weekly monitoring by the class teacher of all absence ensures patterns are addressed quickly. Children with an attendance percentage of 90% or less are highlighted as red, those with an attendance percentage of 95%- 90% will be highlighted as yellow and those whose attendance percentage is 96% or more will be highlighted as green. This links to the same day phone calls where the class teacher will mark a child absent and record if they are currently highlighted as red. This information will inform the headteacher and further action can then be triggered immediately.

Good attendance is at the heart of the school ethos and as a result, class teachers will discuss the importance of good attendance with the children in their class and during school assemblies.

### **Responsibility for Attendance**

Parent/Carers and all staff are ultimately responsible for attendance and punctuality matters.

Others responsible within school for attendance include:

Mrs R Skews – Interim Head of School

Mrs L Cudbill – Office Manager

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with Parents/ Carers in the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## Appendix A

### Model Letter to Parents

Dear

Re: Attendance of . D.O.B:

As part of our commitment to supporting the progress of our pupils, attendance is monitored on a regular basis by the Education Welfare Officer with a view to identifying those pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. has been identified by her as one of those pupils due to their current level of attendance.

Children's attendance is classified in the following way:	
98% - 100%	Excellent attendance
96% - 98%	Good attendance
92% - 96%	Below expected attendance
Below 92%	Cause for concern
Below 92% for more than 3 weeks	Can lead to a penalty notice issued by the Education Welfare Officer

Your child's attendance for this year so far is currently . Whilst we understand that missing school is sometimes unavoidable, I hope that you understand our obligation to highlight their attendance level to you.

We appreciate that as the year proceeds the percentage of their attendance will rise as long as there are no more absent days. All of the school's attendance matters are discussed with the Education Welfare Officer who is available to offer support and advice to you.

Please do come and see me if you feel improving this percentage is a difficulty and you would like some support.

Yours sincerely

Head of School